

Castlemaine Naturalist

June 2022

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**Monthly newsletter of the
Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.**



Seeds of the Black Wattle. *Euan Moore*

May Excursion report – “Seeding Victoria’s seed bank and the La Gerche trail, Creswick”

On a grey drizzly day, around 20 Castlemaine Field Nats members gathered at the Seeding Victoria seed bank in Creswick for our May excursion. This visit was organised for CFNC thanks to David King (Seeding Victoria Board Secretary, and Friends of Campbells Creek enthusiast).

Seeding Victoria is a provenance-based indigenous seed supplier for revegetation projects throughout central, south-west and north-west Victoria, around 50% of the State. It specialises in the development of best practice, ethical sourcing and utilisation of seed. As well as doing ongoing research, working together with other seed banks to ensure effective seed supply into the future, it manages a network of regional seed banks.



Dan explains the seed cleaning process. *Photo Jenny Rolland*

Seeding Victoria has developed a wide network of collectors over many years to ensure that seed is collected ethically and to maintain a strong diversity of seed types. Currently there are around 1600 different species of seed in stock. Buyers range from government organisations (eg, VicRoads, Catchment Management Authorities, shire councils) to nurseries and private individuals for a large range of revegetation project types. Annual seed output is approximately 1.5 tonnes.

Seeding Victoria manager Dan Frost welcomed us and gave us a detailed description of the operation's history and procedures. Dan showed us various seed extraction and cleaning methods, including a range of sieves, vacuum boxes and other machinery. We had a quick look inside the main cool room where approximately 1.5 tonnes of seed is currently stored at around 4 deg C (hence the quick look!).

We then saw a seed collection process in progress, where Blue Gum branches laden with seed pods were drying in the hot house (a much more pleasant environment for humans!). We were all very impressed by Dan's knowledge and enthusiasm. He is ably supported by Elle Fox, Communications and Social Media Officer.

David King spoke about the urgent need for Seeding Victoria to secure more funding to ensure ongoing viability. Seeding Victoria is an incorporated community not-for-profit charitable organisation, employing just two part-time staff. Please consider donating to this extremely worthwhile cause!! More information is available at the Seeding Victoria website: seedingvictoria.com.au.

After lunch most of us had a very pleasant hour's ramble along the nearby La Gerche Trail, where fungi were putting on a show. This is a 2.2 km long walking track that commemorates the life and work of John La Gerche, who was a forest bailiff at Creswick from 1882 until 1897. La Gerche's two outstanding achievements were to halt the rampant cutting of trees for mining and fuel-wood to allow regeneration of the forest, and the establishment of the Creswick Nursery.

The Nursery and surrounds became a centre for experimentation and distribution of trees. The commemorative trail was established in 1998 by Ronald Hateley and students of The University of Melbourne, in collaboration with Victorian Landcare Centre, based at Sawpit Gully at that time. The Sawpit Gully area, including the nursery site and plantation, was granted heritage status in 2014. The site and trail is managed by Parks Victoria, whose Creswick office is located nearby.

For more on the fascinating La Gerche story:
<https://fieldnatballarat.wordpress.com/la-gerche-trail/>



Strolling along the La Gerche Trail. Photo Jenny Rolland

Brian Cutler



Some of the many and varied fungi found on the La Gerche trail. Photos Cathrine Harboe-Ree

#SeedSpotVic

Help Seeding Victoria by becoming a citizen Seed Spotter!

Seeding Victoria is asking you, citizen scientists, to help us monitor and track seed in the landscape! If you see developing or ripe seed from:

- Lightwood (*Acacia implexa*)
- Gold dust wattle (*Acacia acinacea*)
- Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*)
- Yellow box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*)

please take a photo and post it to us with date and location using:

- The SeedSpotVic project page on iNaturalist:
<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/seedspotvic>
- Post on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or LinkedIn with the hashtag #SeedSpotVic or @SeedingVictoria
- Email to seedspotvic@gmail.com

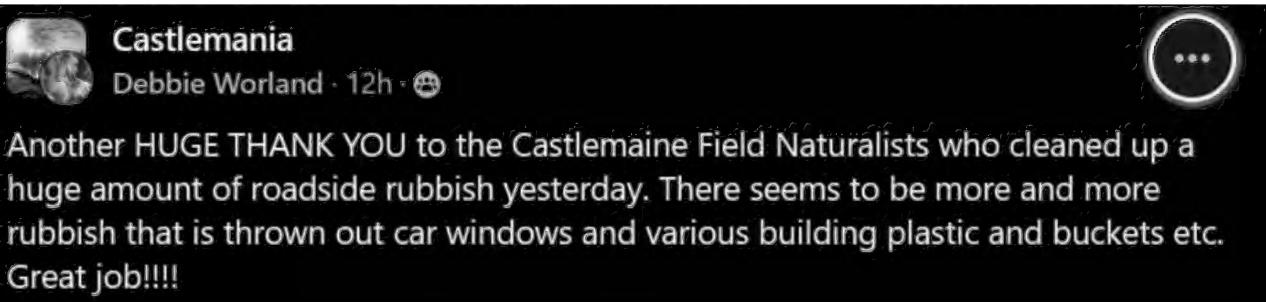
Please note that this is an ‘observation only’ project, and that it is illegal to collect seed without a current DELWP permit.

Roadside Clean-up, 16 May

A Roadside Clean-up was held on Monday 16 May. We got it done in a couple of hours, before the showers. We collected about 650 litres of rubbish, plus a large sun umbrella. Thanks to Jan, Peter, Marli, Jackie, Euan, Jennifer and Sue.

Geoff Harris

Ed. A vote of thanks! Thanks Jackie Moore for pointing this out and thanks Debbie.



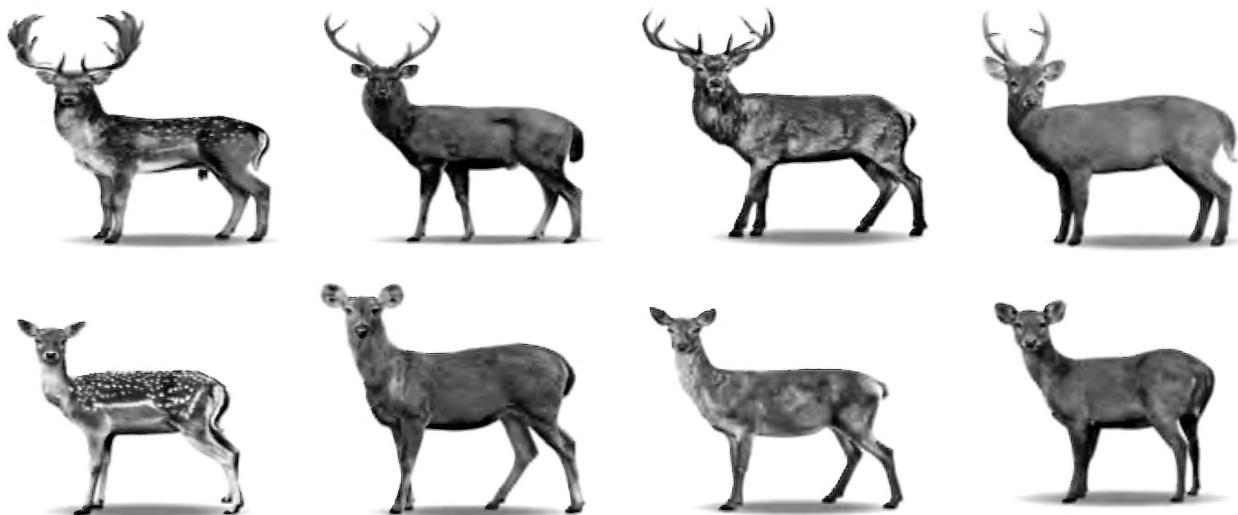
May Meeting report: “Dealing with Deer”

Peter Jacobs, Invasive Species Council

Feral animals have long been a game changer in Australia's ecosystems. Most of the continent is over-run with cats and foxes, the interior with camels and goats, the north with water buffalo and pigs, the high country with wild horses, and now it seems the forests of south-eastern Australia are suffering the rapid growth in numbers of feral deer. This latter problem as it relates to Victoria was dramatically outlined by Peter Jacobs at our May monthly meeting. Peter is the Deer Project Officer for the [Invasive Species Council](#), an NGO advocating for better biosecurity and management of invasive species.

Feral deer are one of Australia's most serious environmental and agricultural threats and Victoria has the greatest population of deer, concentrated mainly in the alpine areas of the east, where they extend into NSW. However, they are becoming numerous in other forested areas such as the Grampians and Wilson's Promontory.

There are four main species of deer in Victoria.



Fallow Deer

Sambar Deer

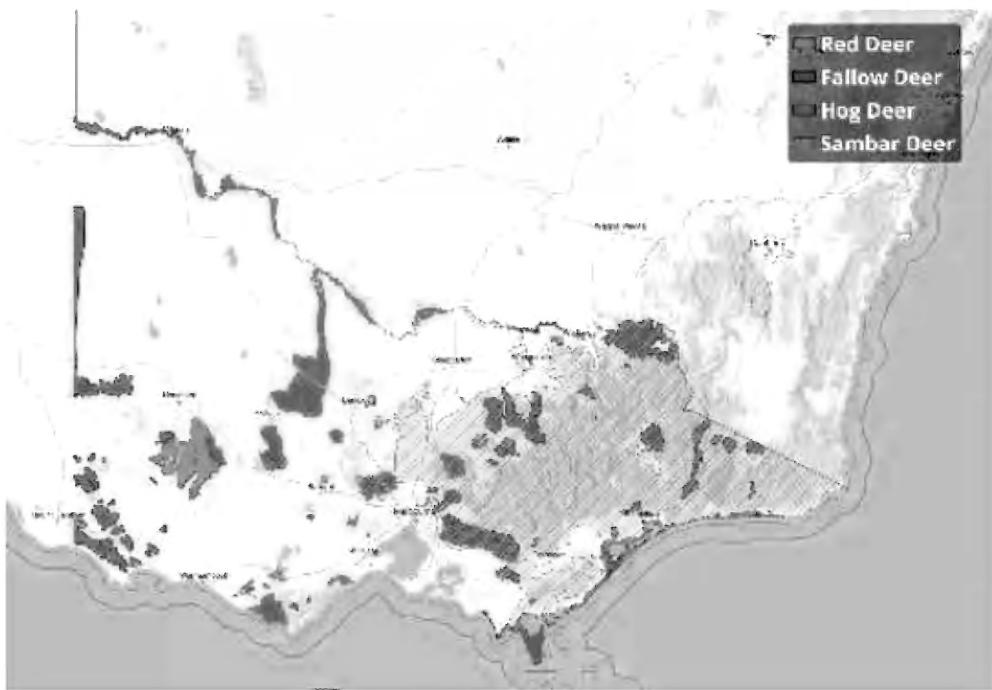
Red Deer

Hog Deer

(male upper and female lower; not to scale)

1. Fallow deer are small, up to 100kg, tend to graze and browse in herds, often on farm land where they can retreat into forest.
2. Sambar deer are large, up to 300kg, and are widespread in eastern Victoria, from the coast to the highest mountains. They are wary, usually in small groups and stay in forest areas. They mostly browse on trees and shrubs, often ring-barking trees and turning alpine moss beds into mud wallows. They may 'honk' when disturbed.
3. Red Deer are the type seen in the Grampians. They are mid-sized, up to 200kg, run in herds and originate from deer farms. Also seen near Bendigo, they 'roar' when disturbed.
4. Hog Deer are a small species, up to 55kg, confined to the Gippsland coast and the Prom. Sought after by hunters, they have a special status as a 'sustainable population'. Interestingly they are classified as Endangered within their native range

in South-east Asia by the IUCN, but are earmarked for eradication in the Wilson's Promontory National Park.



Map showing the current distribution of the four deer species in Victoria.

Deer were first introduced into Australia in the 1860's, and records of occurrence date from around 1920. An animated distribution map was screened showing the spread of occurrence over the years, and dramatically illustrating the exponential increase in populations over just the last 2 or 3 decades. Today they are present in most forested areas in Victoria.

The economic, social and environmental impacts of feral deer on agriculture, forestry, car accidents, visitor experience are estimated to cost \$1.5 – \$2.1 billion by 2051, averaging ~\$60 million per year (modelling by Frontier Economics 2022). This does not take into account the subjective damage to environmental and indigenous cultural values which is difficult to quantify – for example deer invasions are known to impact 13 threatened flora species and 12 ecological communities, and the presence of deer in water catchments can spread diseases and



Environmental impacts of deer: Sambar Deer wallow in EPBC-listed Alpine Peatlands, Fallow Deer in Mallee Fowl mound; bark stripping.

parasites including *Cryptosporidium spp.*

Deer browsing has a considerable effect on ecological restoration. Higher, more substantial guards up to 3m high are needed to prevent new trees being destroyed, and in some cases deer-proof fencing around the area is necessary.

Peter went on to explain the current conundrum presented by conflicting legislation with regard to deer in Victoria. The Federal EPBC Act and the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act specifically mention deer as a threat to biodiversity, however under Victoria's Wildlife Act (1975) feral deer are protected as "game" and cannot be destroyed without permits! This has been the case for some time, although the Wildlife Act is currently under review, and with the massive increase in deer populations there is a move to remove them from their protection and have them categorised as pest species.

Strategic and tactical options for feral deer control in Victoria

Three control plans are currently evolving based on geographic elements: a peri-urban plan has already been published, to be followed by plans for Eastern and Western Victoria. Over \$18 million has been earmarked for a 4-year strategy. Public land managers can now apply for funding of deer control through DELWP.

Peter then described some control methods. Currently advantage is being taken of the areas canopy-cleared by the bushfires of 2020 utilising shooting from helicopters, as well as ground shooting, partly paid for by bushfire recovery funding. Flashing lights attempt to deter deer from crossing roads at strategic points. Deer-proof fencing is becoming common, the greatest effort being on the Bogong High Plains. Monitoring by volunteers and community programs involve the general public.

Four levels of control are mooted depending on the population density and relative isolation of the forest area: prevention, eradication, containment, and as a last resort, asset protection. This approach applies to any invasive species.

Peter then described the methods of tackling the problem. Ground shooting is carried out by hunters, land owners, accredited volunteers, professional pest controllers (including agency staff) and commercial harvesting for pet meat or human consumption. Professional controllers may also use aerial shooting, thermal scopes and drones. In remote areas the professionals are by far the most efficient. Baiting is currently illegal but may have to be considered in future. Repellents have some effect for exclusion.

The talk promoted lively discussion and was rounded off by a brief explanation of the Victorian Deer Control Community Network on which we are represented by Euan Moore. Launched in May 2021, after the community meetings following the peri-urban control report, its purpose is to raise awareness of the problem, build and share knowledge, advocate for effective policy and programs funding and resources, and for targeted research. It has executive support by the Invasive Species Council and is launching a new website through which any interested party can join the network. Local sightings of Deer (which are steadily increasing in our forests) can be reported via the feralscan / deerscan app, or to the VBA (Victorian Biodiversity Atlas). If it seems unusual, a sighting should also be reported to the relevant land manager.

Noel Young

Readers' Observations (Wildlife, June 1944)

George Broadway

June 6, 1944. How many readers who, like me, can remember the newspaper headlines of that day. They were, I think the largest I had ever seen or have seen since. It was of course the Allied landings in Normandy. I don't think I had heard of Normandy before, but the next few weeks made up for that. Names like Cherbourg especially, but also Arromanches, Sainte-Mère-Eglise and Bayeux filled the headlines for some time.

The gist of the Editorial of "Wildlife" was a plea for suitable accommodation for the many Natural History societies which had sprung up.

As we have seen previously, readers did not seem to find as many interesting items to send in for identification during the colder months, but here is a selection. As usual readers kept sending in specimens which been previously identified in earlier issues.

Insects

Lake Womboyn, NSW: A butterfly known by the rather drab name of Common Australian Crow, *Euploea corinna corinna*. The larvae are reddish brown with black and white bands, have 4 pairs of short tentacles, three at the front and one aft. Food is plants having milky juices.

Pakenham: Large Ghost Moth. Now is the time for these to emerge, some from burrows in the ground, others from holes in trees. They usually emerge at night and fly about in ghostly fashion in the drizzly rain.

Mont Albert: Strange green insect with the little horn on each side of the body was a tropical plant bug, which probably became entangled in the wool before it left Queensland.

McKinnon: Very puzzling for the general observer - crane fly minus its wings.

Mordialloc: A Tree Cricket. *Paragryllacris*. Or relative. Large jaws can give a painful nip but not dangerous. Also Apollo Bay.

Mont Albert: Longicorn Beetle, *Phorocantha* sp. Commonly known as Firewood Beetles because frequently brought inside in firewood. (Much more commonly used in those days.)

Pascoe Vale: The little cream things found in the ant nest were not eggs but the pupae of the ants. They are (were) frequently called ants eggs by fish fanciers who used them as fish food.

Botanical

Newport: Every now and then we find one of these "Siamese Twin" fungi, one growing upside down from the cap of the other with its stem in the air.

Kalorama: Your fungus could be called the "Potato Fungus" but it is the immature form of what will become one of the Puff-Balls.

Coburg: The Japonica frequently produces hard woody fruit, sometimes in sufficient quantities to make jelly with a rather tart flavour. Some may not like it but I consider it a delicacy (C.Morrison).

Oakleigh: The weed may become a nuisance if not kept in check; it is the Bladder Hibiscus or Ketmia *Hibiscus trionum*. An introduced species.

Doncaster: The little wildflower with the purple or blue berries is the Flax Lily *Dianella*. The name means “Little Diana” and since Diana was the goddess of grace and beauty, the little plant is well named.

Spiders

Kerang: A Trapdoor spider, but not one that could be considered dangerous.

Nhill: all centipedes are poisonous but only the large tropical ones have jaws powerful enough to pierce human skin. Yes a centipede will frequently remain alive for some time after being cut in half but unlike an earthworm the separate parts will not regrow a head or tail.

General

Melbourne: Curly teeth in a rabbit are a rare but interesting phenomenon caused when the opposing tooth is lost for whatever reason. Rabbit or rodent teeth grow continually but grind against the opposing tooth thus maintaining a sharp chisel edge. If one tooth should be missing, the other continues to grow unchecked until it becomes impossible for the animal to feed and thus starves to death.

Tutye via Ouyen: As you guessed. they are the remains of aboriginal teeth. In the Mallee sand, quantities of aboriginal remains are found; the bones finally disintegrate into chalky powder, but the teeth remain.

Somewhere up North: Military camps often had made pets of some of the local fauna. In one camp a lizard which spent its days on the flywire of the officers' mess catching insects, would parade every evening at the bar for a sip of beer which it took with evident relish. Its subsequent behaviour suggested that it was somewhat under the weather but nevertheless wherever it wandered during the day it always turned up at the bar at night.

Birds of Sutton Grange May 2022 – Nigel Harland

Superb Fairywren	New Holland Honeyeater	Galah
White-browed Scrubwren	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Australian Magpie	Striated Pardalote	Eastern Rosella
Australian Raven	Welcome Swallow	Eurasian Blackbird
Laughing Kookaburra	Red Wattlebird	Southern Boobook
Long-billed Corella	Grey Currawong	
Crimson Rosella	Common Bronzewing	

All a bit quiet this month.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Observations

Peter Turner



Corymbia maculata (Spotted Gum) in the Castlemaine Botanic Gardens



Monarch Butterfly, Dudley St.



Missulena occatoria (Red-headed Mouse Spider), Kalimna Park



Flame Robin



Litoria ewingii (Brown Tree Frog)

Mez Woodward



Ramaria capitata (Coral Fungus)

Cathrine Harboe-Ree



Bolbitius titubans (Egg Yolk Toadstool)



Blue-faced Honeyeater



Goniaea australasiae (Common
Gumleaf Grasshopper)



Wolf spider with spiderlings

COMING EVENTS

MONTHLY MEETING: Friday 10th June, 7.30pm, by Zoom
(see details for joining on the back page)

Speaker: Dr Scarlett Howard (Deakin University)

“What’s on a bee’s mind? Understanding the behaviours of native and introduced bees”

How do we ask a bee a question? Can you train a bee? What types of tasks can they solve? Can they acquire concepts? What is the limit of intelligence in a miniature brain?

Scarlett will answer these questions and more using examples from the European honeybee and Australian native bees. We’ll discuss how you can train a bee, how training differs between species, and how to treat bees as individuals. We will learn how understanding learning, memory and cognition in insects informs us about pollination. And we’ll delve into how we’re pushing the limits of what a miniature bee brain is capable of.

EXCURSION: Saturday 11th June 10am “Moss Foray”, Clinkers Hill with Cassia Read

Cassia will take us for a slow walk in the Clinkers Bushland reserve and nearby exploring the variety of moss species along the way. She will give us clues for distinguishing mosses from lichens and point out the features useful for identification of different moss species including the habitat where they are growing. She will explain the importance of mosses in our ecosystem and their role as colonisers after fire and soil disturbance.

Meet: 10.00am at the Octopus (Duke St, opposite the Castle Motel) or 10.10am at the top end of Preshaw Street, where the tar turns to dirt road.

Bring: A hand lens if you have one, and if it’s a dry day it would be good for a few people to bring a spray bottle of water. Water, snacks, sturdy shoes and hat.

The Field Trip will be cancelled in extreme weather conditions.

South East Australian Naturalists’ Association (SEANA) Spring Camp 2022

Friday 30 September to Sunday 2 October (note change of date)
Hosted by Peninsular Field Naturalists’ Club Inc.

Location: Merricks Uniting Church Camp

Program highlights include birding, wildflower walks, geology and moths

Registration due 31/7/22 (see separate flyers with newsletter mailout with more information about accommodation and the registration form).

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club PROGRAM

Monthly meetings will be held on-line via Zoom again during the winter months (June – August), commencing at 7.30pm. If you have registered for our previous webinar meetings you will be sent the link for registering with Zoom. If you have not joined before and wish to attend, please email Peter Turner at munrods1@iinet.net.au

Our guest speaker(s) will follow the usual 'observations' session when members can share recent interesting sightings with an option to show a photo or two. If you have photos for the meeting, please email JPEG file(s) to Euan Moore at calamanthus5@bigpond.com by noon on the day of the meeting.

Excursions are on the Saturday after the monthly meeting. Meet at the Octopus (opposite the motel in Duke St) for departure at 1.30pm unless otherwise advised.

Fri June 10 Meeting 7.30pm: Dr Scarlett Howard (Deakin University)
“Understanding the behaviours of native and introduced bees”

Sat June 11 Excursion 10am: Cassia Read “Moss Foray”, Clinkers Hill Reserve

Fri July 8 Meeting 7.30pm: Dr Melinda Waterman (Uni of Wollongong) “Antarctic mosses”

Sat July 9 Excursion 1.30pm: Red, White and Blue mine walk

Fri August 12 Meeting 7.30pm: Tanya Loos “Window strike: when birds hit windows”

Membership renewal reminder

Members are reminded that membership renewals are now overdue.
This June issue of the Newsletter will be the last for non-renewals.

Castlemaine Naturalist - email newsletter material to: newsletter.cfnc@gmail.com
* Deadline for the July edition: **24th June**

Club website (Webmaster: Ron Wescott) – www.castlemainefieldnaturalists.org.au

Subscriptions for 2022 (Membership forms on CFNC website)

Ordinary membership: Single \$35, Family \$50

Pensioner or student: Single \$25, Family \$30

Subscription includes the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist.

2022 Committee

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